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*Letter 117*



Beloved Companion:

I have given you the Western Traditions, revelation and teaching, on the matter of the Group Soul, but this time, I want to give you this teaching as it concerns the Group Mind. The term Group Mind is often used loosely among Occultists as if it were interchangeable with Group Soul. The concepts are, however, entirely distinct. The Group Soul is the raw material of Mind Stuff out of which individual Consciousness is differentiated by Experience. The Group Mind is built up out of the contributions of many individualized Consciousnesses, concentrating upon the same idea. Let me take a concrete instance to make this clear. During the height of his popularity Monsieur Joffre visited England and was accorded a great ovation. While driving from his hotel, to the Mansion House to be received by the Lord Mayor, his car passed thru many streets. Individuals recognized him and stared, but no demonstration was made.

When he came to the crowded Mansion House Crossing, policemen held up the traffic, saluting. The crowd saw something was afoot, he was recognized, his name passed from mouth to mouth, and in a moment there was a wave of wild enthusiasm. This self-contained class of people were lifted and carried away by the wave of excitement and found themselves shouting and waving their hands like maniacs. Now I want you to notice the difference between the behavior of that crowd when it functioned as a crowd, to the behavior of the isolated individuals. However numerous, they merely stared with interest, with no emotion.

Another story told regarding the Mansion House in London, is very illustrative of crowd psychology and the Group Mind. Many years ago, Abdul Hamed, the detested Sultan of Turkey visited England, and he too, was received by the Lord Mayor and drove to the Mansion House. Exactly the same things were repeated, but with a different emotional contact. He drove thru the crowded streets, individuals staring, open-mouthed at the notorious visitor, and made no demonstration, but when the traffic was held up for him at the Mansion House Crossing, the crowd recognized him, and these quiet, sober middle-aged city men sent up a howl of execration, like the cry of a pack of wolves. The crowd surged forward as one man, and it was with the greatest difficulty the Sultan was saved from being dragged from his carriage.

Which of those individual city men would have assaulted Abdul Hamed single-handed? But when caught up in a wave of the crowd emotions they were capable of making a savage attack, and made a babel of animal cries. For the moment, something like a possessive entity took possession of the Souls of all, a vast something of a character was not the sum of the mass of the Individual Souls, but vaster, more potent, more fiercely and more vividly alive and conscious of its impulses, yet at ordinary times, the thronging crowd at that Crossing go each their own way, absorbed in their own thoughts, indifferent to and oblivious of their neighbors. What was it that turned this mass of hurrying individuals into a united band afflicted by the enthusiasm of an idea or an organism capable of dangerous violence.

The Key to the whole situation lies in the direction of the attention of a number of people to a common object, about which they all feel strongly in the same way. Direction of attention to a



common object, without emotion, does not have the same effect, - the electric signs of Broadway, while crowds stare at them, do not cause the formation of a Group Mind.

Now with these facts as a basis, let us consider the problem in its Occult Application - what is this strange Oversoul which forms and disperses so quickly when a doctrine of artificial Elementals. An artificial Elemental is a Thought Form, ensouled by Elemental Essence. That Essence may be drained directly from the Elemental Kingdom, or it may be derived from the Magician's own Aura. A Thought Form built up by continual visualizing and concentrating and concerning which is a strong Emotional Thought, becomes charged with that Emotion from its Creator. This is a very important factor in practical Occultism, and the explanation of many of its Phenomena. You see something of the purpose of visualizing and concentrating in the early lessons.

It is exactly the same process, at least to the formation of an artificial Elemental by a Magician takes place when a number of people concentrate with Emotion on a single object. They make an artificial Elemental, vast and potent in proportion to the size of the crowd and the intensity of its feeling. This Elemental has a very marked Mental Atmosphere of its Own, and this atmosphere influences most powerfully the feelings of other persons participating in the crowd emotion. It gives them telepathic suggestions, sounds a note of its own Being in their ears, and thereby reinforces the emotional vibration which originally gave it birth. There is action, and reaction mutual stimulation, and intensification between the Elemental and its makers, for the more the crowd concentrates upon its object of emotion the vaster the Elemental becomes, the stronger the mass suggestion it gives to the Individuals composing the crowd that created, and they repeating the suggestion, find their feelings intensified, and thus it is that mobs are capable of deeds of passion, from which every individual member would shrink with horror.

A mob Elemental, however, disperses as rapidly as it forms, because a mob has no continuity of existence. The moment the stimulant of a common Emotion is removed, the mob ceases to be a Unit and reverts to heterogeneity, and that is why undisciplined Armies are unreliable fighting machines, however enthusiastic - their enthusiasm evaporates, if it is not continually stimulated. They split up into their component parts of many individuals, with diversified interest, each actuated by the instinct of Self-Preservation --- to build up a Group Mind of any endurance, some method ensuring continuity of attention and feeling is essential.

Whenever such continuity of attention and feeling is brought about, a Group Mind, or Group Elemental is formed, which with the passage of time, develops into an Individuality of its own, and ceases to be dependent for its existence upon the attention and emotion of the crowd that gave it birth. Once this occurs, the crowd no longer possesses the power to withdraw its attention or to disperse. The Group Elemental has it in its grip, the attention of each individual is attracted and held in spite of itself, feelings are stirred within him even if he does not wish to feel them.

Each newcomer to the Group enters into this potent atmosphere and either accepts it and is absorbed into the Group, or rejects it and is himself rejected. No member of a Group with a strong atmosphere, Group Mind or Elemental, (according to which ever term you pre-



fer) is at liberty to think without bias upon the Objects of Group Concentration or Emotion. It is for this reason that reforms are so hard to bring about.

The vaster the organism that needs reforming, the harder it is to move, and the stronger must be the first Individuality that attempts the Path, yet once that forceful Individuality has begun to make an impression, it speedily finds that a Group is gathering under his leadership, and that this, in its turn, is developing an Elemental and the momentum he has originated has begun to push him along. When he flags in his leadership, the movement he created forces him forward. The solitary Individual, may turn aside and pause in moments of doubt and discouragement, but not so the leader of the strongly emotionalized Group. As soon as he slacks his pace, he feels the pressure of the Group Mind behind him, and it carries him forward during his hours of weakness. It may also, if his scheme has been unwisely conceived, carry him away and wreck the teacher upon the rock of a misjudged Policy, a Policy of which he would have seen the lack of Wisdom if he had considered the matter rationally. There is no stopping the momentum of a movement which is moving along the lines of Evolution. The Group Mind of the participants form a channel for the manifestation of the Forces of Evolution and the momentum developed is irresistible, but however potent the Individuality, however vast the resources, however popular the catch phrases, if the movement is contrary to Cosmic Law, it is merely a matter of time until the whole group rushes madly down the steep slope into the sea, for in such a case it is the very momentum that is worked up which is the cause of its destruction. Give a false movement enough rope and it will always hang itself, falling by its own weight, when that has grown sufficiently top-heavy to overbalance it.

In the Bonds of the Eternal Brotherhood,

Sri Dayananda,

S.C.